



Home for the Holidays

Ten Warning Signs: Your Older Family Member May Need Help

For many Americans, the Holiday season is one of the few times during the year that adults and their older loved ones spend quality time together. The Holidays may be a time when families face and discuss the difficult decisions about finding care for their older relative. The Eldercare Locator has produced a guide of “10 warning signs” to help families and older Americans determine if help is needed. Any one of the behaviors listed may or may not indicate that an action should be taken and your family member’s physician should be kept informed of physical or psychological behavior changes.

Has your family member:

- Changed eating habits within the last year resulting in weight loss, having no appetite, or missed meals?
- Neglected personal hygiene resulting in wearing dirty clothes, body odor, bad breath, neglected nails and teeth, sores on the skin?
- Neglected their home so it is not as clean or sanitary as you remember growing up?
- Exhibited inappropriate behavior by being unusually loud or quiet, paranoid, agitated, making phone calls at all hours?
- Changed relationship patterns such that friends and neighbors have expressed concerns?
- Had physical problems such as burns or injury marks resulting from general weakness, forgetfulness, or possible misuse of alcohol or prescribed medications?
- Decreased or stopped participating in activities that were previously important to them such as bridge or a book club, dining with friends, or attending religious services?
- Exhibited forgetfulness resulting in unopened mail, piling newspapers, not filling their prescriptions, or missed appointments?
- Mishandled finances such as not paying bills, losing money, paying bills twice or more, or hiding money?
- Made unusual purchases such as buying more than one magazine subscription of the same magazine, entered an unusual amount of contests, increased usage of purchasing from television advertisements?

**To access services, contact the
Eldercare Locator at 800-677-1116
or through the Web site at
www.eldercare.gov.**

Through the Eldercare Locator, individuals and their families can get information on services available through the state and area agencies on aging and local aging service providers.

What are some examples of services to assist my family member?

Adult Day Care: Adult Day Care Centers offer social, recreational and health-related services to individuals in a protective setting who cannot be left alone during the day because of health care and social need, confusion or disability.

Information and Referral/Assistance Information Services (I&R/A): Information Specialists are available to provide assistance and linkage to available services and resources.

Case Management: Case managers work with family members and older adults to assess, arrange and evaluate supportive efforts of seniors and their families to remain independent.

Elder Abuse Prevention Programs: Allegations of abuse, neglect and exploitation of senior citizens are investigated by highly trained protective service specialists. Intervention is provided in instances of substantiated elder abuse, neglect or exploitation.

Emergency Response Systems: There are a number of services available to provide in-home 24-hour electronic alarm system that enables an elderly homebound person to summon help in the event of an emergency.

Employment Services: There are various programs available to help older adults explore employment opportunities.

Financial Assistance: There are benefit programs that are available and may include consumer protection, energy assistance, financial management counseling, food stamp assistance, prescription drug assistance, and social security.

Nutrition Services: Home Delivered Meals popularly known as "Meals on Wheels," are nutritious meals delivered to the homes of older persons who are homebound. Congregate Meals provide the opportunity for persons aged 60 and over to enjoy a meal and socialize with other seniors in the community.

Home Health Services: Home health care includes such care activities as changing wound dressings, checking vital signs, cleaning catheters and providing tube feedings.

Legal Assistance: Legal advice and representation is available to persons aged 60 and over for certain types of legal matters including government program benefits, tenant rights, and consumer problems.

Personal Care: Services to assist individuals with functional impairments with bathing, dressing, shopping, walking, housekeeping, supervision, emotional security, eating and assistance with securing health care from appropriate sources.

Respite Care: Respite is relief or rest, for a specified period of time, from the constant/continued supervision, companionship, therapeutic and/or personal care of a person with a functional impairment.

Senior Housing Options: There are a variety of housing options available for older adults including: assisted living, retirement communities, nursing facilities, government assisted housing, and shared housing.

Senior Center Programs: Senior Centers offer a variety of recreational and educational programs, seminars, events and activities for the active and less active older adult.

Telephone Reassurance: Provides regular contact and safety check by trained volunteers to reassure and support senior citizens and disabled persons who are homebound.

Transportation: Transportation services are available for individuals who are older or disabled that do not have private transportation and who are unable to utilize public transportation to meet their needs.

Volunteer Services: There are numerous volunteer programs and opportunities available for older adults such as daily telephone reassurance, friendly visiting and insurance counseling.

To access services and for additional information on available programs for older adults and their caregivers in your area, contact the Eldercare Locator Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. ET at **800-677-1116** or through the Web site at **www.eldercare.gov**.

The Eldercare Locator is a public service of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration on Aging and is administered by the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging in cooperation with the National Association of State Units on Aging.